

Maryland State Department of Education
Child and Adult Care Food Program

**AUTOMATIC ELIGIBILITY FOR FREE MEALS
FOR CHILDREN IN THE HEAD START PROGRAM**

The following documentation must be available at the Institution's office for review by the MSDE or U. S. Department of Agriculture staff:

1. A copy of the Head Start grant award indicating "funded enrollment."
2. The Head Start statement of a child's income eligibility issued upon their initial enrollment in the Head Start Program. This can be accomplished by having the actual statements readily available for inspection **OR** supplying a list of names of the income-eligible Head Start children along with a statement certifying that those are currently enrolled as participants in the Head Start Program based on a determination that the children are from families that meet the low-income criteria prescribed under the Head Start act. The certification statement must include the signature of the Head Start employee authorized to provide the certification on behalf of the Head Start office and the date (see sample).
3. A copy of the *Addendum to Policy Statement for Automatic Eligibility for Free Meals for Children in the Head Start Program* for the fiscal year being reviewed.

Note: Two conditions that **must** be met for children to be automatically eligible for free meals:

1. Children must be part of Head Start's "funded enrollment" which is the number of children (slots) that the Head Start grantee is to serve, as indicated on the grant award. Under Head Start Program regulation (45 CFR § 1305.2), "enrollment" means the official acceptance of a family by a Head Start Program and the completion of all procedures necessary for a child and family to begin receiving services.
2. Children must be determined to be a member of a family that meets low-income criteria prescribed under the Head Start Act.

A child must meet **both** criteria to be automatically eligible for free meals. If both conditions are not met, then you must have a complete, correct, and current Income Eligibility Statement/Meal Benefit Form on file to claim the child's meals in the free or reduced-price category. The child's meals must be claimed at the "paid" rate of reimbursement if you do not have a free meal application on file.